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Statement of Representative Christopher Shays September 11, 2006

Today marks the five-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks on our country. On that fateful day, the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field of Pennsylvania became epicenters of a seismic event still generating aftershocks across our nation, and around the world.

It is fitting we begin today by observing a moment of silence in recognition of those lost, and the suffering of the loved ones they left behind.

Five years after September 11th, our nation is engaged in a global war against what the 9/11 Commission called Islamist extremists. In one of those operational theaters we are meeting fierce resistance. The conflict in Iraq finds US and Coalition forces up against increasing insurgent, sectarian and terrorist violence.

Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, a supporter of the United States objective to foster progressive democracy in the Middle East bluntly stated, "It is now obvious that we are not midwifing democracy in Iraq. We are baby-sitting a civil war."

While some may take issue with Mr. Friedman's choice of words, the broad contours of his point are clear—the violence in Iraq continues (if not increases), the new Iraqi leadership has not yet shown the political will to confront it, and efforts to promote peace and democracy are stalled.

Iraqi Security Forces are truly improving and growing in number, but they face an uphill battle if Iraqi politicians are not willing to confront the militias and make peace among themselves.

With their country teetering toward chaos and political differences impeding progress, Iraqi leaders took a one-month vacation. When their Parliament, the Council of Representatives, returned to session last week, more than one-third was not in attendance.

Let me be clear. I have, and continue to be, a strong supporter of our cause in Iraq. I believe it is a noble effort we have no choice but to win. But we must go where the truth leads us, wherever it leads us.

During this week, in three separate hearings our Committee will examine security force levels; prospects for national reconciliation; and the consequences of leaving Iraq immediately, later but still prematurely, or when Iraqis are capable of taking over for Coalition forces.

At today's session we are focusing on the number of Iraqi Security Forces required to secure their own country. The answer to this question is critical to the Iraqi people and to Americans here at home.

We will hear first today from Ambassador Eric Edelman, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy at the Department of Defense, and Rear Admiral William Sullivan, Vice Director for Strategic Plans and Policy, representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

During Panel II, we will hear from retired US Army Major General William Nash, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Preventive Action at the Council on Foreign Relations; Dr. Bruce Hoffman, an expert on insurgencies and terrorism, previously at RAND Corporation and currently Professor of Strategic Studies at Georgetown University; and Mr. Alan King, who commanded a U.S. Army Civil Affairs Battalion in Iraq and was advisor for Tribal Affairs to U.S. authorities in Iraq.

We thank all of our witnesses for their participation.